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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL
AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT

Concluding observations of the Committee on
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

LEBANON

1. The Committee considered the initial report of Lebanon on articles 1 to 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its 14th, 16th and 21st meetings on 25, 26 and 28 May 1993, and adopted 1/ the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of Lebanon for sending a delegation to present its initial report and to engage in a dialogue with members of the Committee. The Committee views this as a demonstration of goodwill and of good faith in response to the Government's obligations under the Covenant and in light of the great difficulties prevailing in Lebanon.

3. The Committee welcomes the statement of the Government of Lebanon as presented by its representatives, expressing its regrets for the delay in submitting its report and for the brevity of the report submitted, owing to the circumstances of conflict that have prevailed in the country over the past 16 years. The Committee looks forward therefore, to a more comprehensive report on succeeding occasions, as pledged by the Government.

1/ At its 21st meeting (eighth session), held on 28 May 1993.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the current initiatives undertaken by the Government to review its existing laws with the goal in mind of updating them to address current situations and of putting together a national agenda for development that would promote and protect the economic, social and cultural rights of everyone on equal terms.

5. The Committee commends the establishment of government agencies directly responsible for the welfare of children, disabled and displaced persons.

6. The Committee notes with satisfaction that primary education is free and compulsory, and that education is being made available to all.

7. The Committee is encouraged by ongoing government efforts towards alleviating the predicament of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Covenant

8. The Committee recognizes the dilemma that the Government of Lebanon faces in addressing the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country with only very limited resources available. In turn, the process of reconstruction itself has hampered the resettlement of displaced communities.

9. The Committee observes that the lack of administrative mechanisms to gather and monitor information, has seriously impaired the Government's information concerning the national situation as it relates to economic, social and cultural rights.

10. The Committee notes that the absence of a framework for civil law marriage requires many persons to leave the country in order to marry. This in turn has a negative effect on the Government's capacity to protect the family.

D. Principal subjects of concern

11. The Committee expresses its concern over the large number of persons displaced as a result of the armed conflict, and the concomitant economic, social and cultural problems. In particular, the Committee cites the serious problems in housing where it concerns displaced persons, especially farmers who have been forced to abandon their lands.

12. The Committee is also concerned about the disruptions in the Lebanese economy and the resulting high rate of unemployment.

E. Suggestions and recommendations

13. The Committee notes, that while the Government of Lebanon continues to perform its functions under very significant resource and other constraints, it remains essential that the highest priority be accorded to the realization of basic economic, social and cultural rights by all members of the society.

14. The Committee recommends that the problem of unemployment be addressed without delay and reminds the Government of its obligations under articles 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the Covenant. The Committee recommends that government employees be accorded the right to form and join trade unions in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant.

15. In view of the fact that the Government of Lebanon is fully aware of the problems of displaced persons, the Committee encourages the Government to further its efforts to stabilize the situation.

16. The Committee recommends that the second periodic report of Lebanon should be considerably more detailed than the initial report and suggests that, if the Government so wishes, the report might be prepared with the assistance of an expert provided under the Advisory Services Programme of the Centre for Human Rights.